

## ***Quaker Meeting House, Chelmsford***

*Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2QL*

*National Grid Reference: TL 70137 07315*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house has medium heritage significance as a post-war building designed by a prominent Quaker architect.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***The building has low evidential value, as it is a relatively recent structure built on a site previous in use as a garden.***

#### ***Historical value***

***As a post-war building, the meeting house has low historical value.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house has medium aesthetic value, due to the quality of the plain and austere architectural detailing, as well as the high quality original furnishings and the association with the architect Paul Mauger.***

#### ***Communal value***

***The building is of high communal value, due to its primary use as a Quaker meeting house as well as its use by local community groups.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Essex*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0028400*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting with Friends Trusts Limited who hold the deeds as custodian trustees*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Chelmsford City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Chelmsford*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1957–8*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Paul V. Mauger*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 June 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Anne Lutyens-Stobbs and Peter Garratt*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *detached burial ground in Broomfield Road with lodge (85 Broomfield Road, listed grade II)*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Bibliographic references:

Bettley, J. and Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England: Essex*, 2007, p. 208  
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 175–8  
Essex Historic Environment Record, Former Law Library, MonUID: MEX1006895  
Mid-Essex Area Meeting, 'History of the meeting houses',  
<http://www.midessexquakers.org.uk/history-meeting-houses.php>  
Local Meeting archive, original plan  
Local Meeting survey by Anne Lutyens-Stobbs, 2014 and 2015

## **Part 2: The Meeting House & Burial Ground: history, contents, use, setting and designation**

### 2.1 Historical background

The present meeting house is the fifth in Chelmsford. The first meeting house was located in Baddow Road. It had an attached burial ground and both were in use by 1667. (The meeting house continued to be used until 1866.) In 1701, a new meeting house was built on a site in nearby Mildmay Road, with upstairs accommodation for poor elderly widowed Friends. This meeting house also had a burial ground which was in use from 1789 to 1866. In 1790, the meeting house was demolished and replaced by a new building on the same site. This in turn was demolished in 1824. A fourth meeting house was built in 1823–4 on a new site in Duke Street to designs by the local architect John Collis. This also had a burial ground on site. In 1855, a new burial ground was opened in Broomfield Road and a lodge built. (This burial ground is still in use.)

In 1957, the meeting house in Duke Street was sold to the local council for use as a youth centre. (Since then it has been used as a library, most recently by Anglia Ruskin University. Now known as the Anne Knight Building, its future use is currently under consideration.) In 1958, all the burials on the Duke Street site were moved to the Broomfield Road burial ground. The sale of the meeting house funded the acquisition of a new site in Rainsford Road and the construction of a new meeting house, as well as new meeting houses for Brentwood (*qv*) and Billericay (*qv*). The new meeting house in Chelmsford was designed by Paul V. Mauger (1896–1982) of Paul Mauger & Partners, Welwyn. The designs date from May 1956 and the meeting house was opened in early 1958 (see plan in Local Meeting archive). The cost was £12,000. The meeting house has seating for 100, and ancillary spaces include two classrooms and a library. The meeting's book collection includes numerous historic books, mainly Quaker books from the eighteenth century. The oldest volume is a copy of the so-called 'Treacle' Bible of 1595, a revised version of the English language Bishop's Bible of 1568.

### 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The meeting house was built in 1957–8 to designs by Paul V. Mauger. The materials are stock brick laid in stretcher and Flemish bond with projecting headers. The walls on either side of the main entrance are rendered. The main meeting room is square in plan, with a slate-covered pyramidal roof and clerestory windows. To the southwest and northwest sides are low flat-roofed ancillary spaces, with the main entrance at the centre of the southwest elevation (photo top left). The side entrance is at the south, beside covered bike parking (in the form of original grooved paving slabs and wall-mounted rings) and a garden store along the southeast wall.

The main meeting room is plain and well-lit by four clerestory windows and glazed doors to the garden. The ceiling has acoustic tiles and the floor is of woodblock. The walls are panelled in timber above panel heaters. There are elegant 1950s style wall-mounted lights with glass shades as well as a later ceiling chandelier. Sliding doors can be opened to an adjoining space which normally serves as a chair store. There is a folding partition between the two classroom spaces (photo bottom right).

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

Throughout the meeting house, there are fine 1950s timber chairs and benches, possibly designed by the architect.

## 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/a

## 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house occupies a corner site overlooking a busy multi-lane junction of the A1016 and A1060. The road widening and the construction of the A1016 had a negative impact on the setting of the meeting house, due to road noise and loss of some surrounding land which was compulsorily purchased. To the rear (north) of the meeting house is a small garden, containing a bench dated 1957 and an apple tree planted in 2007 for the meeting house's anniversary. There is also a cherry tree planted as a Hiroshima memorial. There is a small on-site car park to the southeast of the site.

A short distance away is the detached burial ground in Broomfield Road (TL 70308 07680). This is a long thin strip of land behind a cemetery lodge. A brick wall has a date stone of 1855. The same year, the lodge (listed grade II) was built to designs by Frederick Chancellor (1825–1918), a local architect and later mayor of Chelmsford. The lodge is currently rented out and the tenant also maintains the burial ground.

The former meeting house in Duke Street (listed grade II under 'Law Library', now known as the Anne Knight Building) was until recently used by Anglia Ruskin University. It currently stands empty but there are plans to refurbish it as part of the railway station area improvements. Restrictive covenants banning the use of alcohol on the site apparently pose a problem for a potential cultural use.

## 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. It is a plain building typical for the 1950s, especially in its use of projecting brick headers on the elevations. Paul Mauger (himself a Quaker) was one of the most prominent architects of Quaker meeting houses during the post-war period. He also built several Methodist churches. Only one of his buildings is listed (apart from a barn conversion): his own house at 26 Pentley Park in Welwyn Garden City, a modern movement house of 1936–7 (grade II). The Chelmsford Meeting House does not meet the criteria for the listing of post-war places of worship. It would be suitable for inclusion in Chelmsford Council's Register of Buildings of Local Value.

## 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Map analysis has shown that there have been no previous buildings on the site. Between c.1874 and 1957, it was part of the garden of Coval Lodge, an early nineteenth-century building with gatehouse (both listed grade II). There are no Quaker burials on the site. Therefore, the archaeological potential is considered to be low.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Fair.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/a

### 3.2 Maintenance

The down pipes are rusty and there are problems with the clerestory windows. Some of the ground floor windows have already been replaced in UPVC and the replacement of the remainder is planned for this year (2014), together with a new roof and a general refurbishment. As a second stage, it is planned to insulate the roof and remove the asbestos behind the meeting room's panel heaters. An inspection in 2009 by Terry J. Gregson of GH Chartered Surveyors, Billericay, found no major problems. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. A five-year maintenance and repair plans is being developed by the area meeting.

### 3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: Supplier changed to renewable energy (Ecotricity)
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: Paper and plastics recycling; composting
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: the first phase of refurbishment started in August 2014
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: maintenance of boundary trees and lawn without pesticides
- Transport: The meeting's website encourages public transport use.

The meeting does not have an energy performance certificate and would not consider obtaining one.

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the required amenities. It is accessible by public transport and has on-site car and bicycle parking. There is no resident warden.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. It has level access, an accessible WC, and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. There has been no formal Disability Access Audit.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 3 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 90 hours per week. It is used for an average of 28 hours per week. There is a letting policy but no explicit policies for excluding certain groups. Users value the meeting house due to its convenient location, public transport connections, congenial atmosphere and reasonable cost.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has generally low crime levels and there is no ongoing heritage crime. However, the litter found outside occasionally includes syringes, and in December 2012, two windows were broken in a break-in attempt which was reported to police. Between June 2010 and November 2011, there were six recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Police team.

### 3.8 Plans for change

There are no plans, apart from the final phase of refurbishment (of the kitchen, library, small meeting room, men's cloakroom and entrance foyer).

#### **Part 4: Impact of Change**

##### 4.1 To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

*i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting:* The meeting house is a modern, flexible building which could be altered if necessary. The chairs and benches are of a high quality and are contemporary with the building. They should be retained if possible.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* There is already additional community use and the meeting house is flexible enough to be used for a range of activities.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* In the event of closure, the building could be used for a wide range of secular purposes. Alternatively, the site could be redeveloped (subject to planning permission).

#### **Part 5: Category: 3**